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SHEBNA AND ELIAKIM: A REPLY

In the *Journal* for last October Professor König did me the honor of subjecting my article on "A New Chapter in the Life of Isaiah," which appeared in the *Journal* for October, 1905, to a thorough, though kindly, criticism. It calls both for my sincere thanks and for a reply. A reformulation of the theories advanced in the light of the criticisms passed upon them may be of use in determining whether they are to be rejected as an unwarrantable speculation or to be raised to the dignity of a working hypothesis.

As my critic and I substantially agree on the exegesis of Isa. 22:15-18, I shall make only one correction in a particular in which I laid myself open to a not unnatural misapprehension. I did not make the denial of the genuineness of vs. 15b "a secondary basis" of my reconstructions. While holding that the clause is probably not genuine (p. 623), I distinctly postulate its historical trustworthiness (p. 634). I pass on to the really vital points in the discussion.

A. In the exegesis of vss. 24, 25 Professor König (p. 679) agrees with me (p. 623) that the subject of vs. 25 cannot be Shebna, but he claims (p. 677) that I deny that it refers to Eliakim. On the contrary, I argue for this with all the earnestness at my command (p. 626). Where we differ is in our views of the originality of vss. 24, 25. My contention is that, when once vss. 24 ff. are referred to Eliakim, their original connection with what precedes must be denied (*a*) because the admittedly (Professor König, p. 679) ironical reference to Eliakim is quite out of place in a prophecy against his rival Shebna, and (*b*) because such an ironical reference is equally out of harmony with the enthusiasm expressed for Eliakim in vss. 20-23. Hence, if vss. 24 ff. refer to Eliakim, they must be uttered by opponents of Eliakim and not by the writers of vss. 15-23. The attempt of Professor König to connect vss. 24 ff. with what precedes by construing them conditionally cannot be regarded as satisfactory. Granting for the sake of argument that the verses could be construed conditionally (which I really do not grant), yet a conditional force can be fairly given to a sentence not conditional in form only when the context necessitates it. But in the present instance the context actually forbids taking vss. 24 ff. conditionally. Shebna is the person addressed throughout vss. 15-23 on the usual interpretation. But what object is there in introducing even a conditional warning against Eliakim in a philippic against Shebna? If Eliakim were addressed, we might discover one; but he is not. Further, after the positive declaration that Eliakim is to be an honor to his father's house, we look for anything but a warning not to let the honor of his father's house hang too heavily

upon him, lest he fail. But if Professor König's conditional construction be rejected, the denial of the originality of vss. 24 ff. in this connection is the only alternative. The historical inference from this conclusion follows almost of itself. Shebna and Eliakim are rivals. As Shebna is opposed at the same time to Isaiah—i. e., is anti-prophetic—it is natural to suppose that Eliakim, his rival, is a member of the prophetic party. But the rivalry between these two leaders must have been very intense and have influenced the national life very profoundly. The intense partisan spirit of vss. 24, 25 testifies to the acuteness of the situation.

B. The second exegetical basis in my argument to which Professor König takes exception is that vs. 19 is a gloss and vss. 20-23 are to be separated from vss. 15-18. This position was founded upon the following considerations:

1. The change of person at vs. 19, which points to a possible break in the text. Professor König contends that the change of person is a frequent phenomenon in prophecy and does not necessarily witness to a faulty text. Granted. On the other hand, the change of person often is a danger signal. Is it so here? I think so, and for the following reason. Isaiah is tremendously wrought up in vss. 15-18. It is the one case in which he singles out a private individual for attack, and his language is severe in the extreme. In other words, Isaiah's own personality is emphasized in vss. 15-18 as in few other passages in his prophecies. Hence the change at vs. 19, where he is supposed to speak in the name of God, is in this instance psychologically unnatural. Yet I would not dare to rest my case on this argument alone.

2. But the argument from change of person is supported by the content of vs. 19, which says less than vss. 15-18. In vss. 15-18 death is promised; in vs. 19, only deposition from office. As Eliakim is promised the vacated office of Shebna in vss. 20-23, vs. 19 is most naturally taken as the introduction to what follows rather than as the conclusion to what precedes. Vs. 19 modulates the general and all-inclusive threats of vss. 15-18 into the specific threat of deposition from office, in order to lead on into the new theme of the promise to Eliakim in vss. 20-23. My point is that the author of vs. 19 has the interpretation of vss. 20-23 as a promise to Eliakim of the office of Shebna especially in mind. Vs. 19 is therefore the connecting link between vss. 15-18 and 20-23; but its logical connection is with the latter verses and not with the former, as it begins the subject of Shebna's punishment anew. It is not contended that there is even a formal contradiction between vs. 19 and vss. 15-18, and here Professor König is right as against Marti; but it *is* contended that just at the point

where we meet with a suspicious change of person, there we meet also with a break in the logical sequence of the passage.

3. At this point I would raise the question whether the interpretation of vss. 20–23 which is implied in vs. 19 is correct. The contention of my article was that, if vss. 20–23 are considered by themselves, they seem to promise something far higher than the office of major domo to Eliakim; viz., the kingship itself. In reply to the arguments adduced to support this view, Professor König (*a*) asks: Why, if the kingship was promised, was not ממשלה used instead of ממשלה? I might retort: Why, if *only* the office of major domo was intended, was not מצב used instead of ממשלה? On my view, which sees in vs. 19 the work of a glossator who misinterpreted vss. 20–23, we perceive how he felt under the necessity of interpreting ממשלה in a very restricted sense in order to suit his theory. (*b*) Again Professor König gives no argument to support his denial (p. 684) of my inference from אבנא. (*c*) It is urged further (p. 684), that the description of Eliakim as a father to Judah and Jerusalem could apply to the major domo. I grant it, but it will apply even better to the king. (*d*) Professor König holds that the key (vs. 22*a*) distinctly points to the major domo. But vs. 22*b* points to a king as the possessor of the key. In the power to open and shut we have *absolute* power. There is no place for a king above the possessor of this key, and Rev. 3:7 is a far more accurate analogy to our present passage than I Chron. 9:27 which Professor König adduces (p. 686).

Professor König's final argument that Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, was not of the Davidic line, and hence could not have been promised the kingship, will be considered later. But apart from this one argument it is claimed that vss. 20–23 considered by themselves are far more naturally interpreted as promising the kingship than as promising the office of major-domo. But if vss. 20–23 originally promised the kingship to Eliakim, it follows inevitably that the author of vs. 19, which connects this promise with the prophecy of the deposition of Shebna (vss. 15–18), has misunderstood vss. 20–23, and that vs. 19 is a gloss. But the arguments thus far employed—change of person, doubtful connection of vs. 19, internal impressions of vss. 20–23—would not be sufficient of themselves to support my constructions, and hence I introduced at this point the argument that to me is of most weight in corroborating the previous arguments, but the full force of which Professor König does not seem to have appreciated, for he apparently fails to take note of the way in which it was utilized.

C. My third main proposition was that, when vss. 15–18 and 20–23 are respectively examined *in the light of chaps. 36 and 37*, the discrepancy

between the two sections already suggested by what has preceded now becomes very obvious.

1. The crucial point is the chronological relationship of 22:15-18 to chaps. 36 and 37. I sought to show that vss. 15-18 can be understood only when placed *after* chaps. 36 ff. The position of Shebna as scribe (a cabinet position; cf. I Kings, chap. 4) and as a member of a special committee to treat with Isaiah in the most critical situation of Hezekiah's reign, is incredible after Isaiah's terrible denunciation of him. On the other hand, if 22:15-18 follows chaps. 36 and 37, we at once have an intelligible and illuminating sequence. The indignation of Isaiah is seen to be stirred by the fact that Shebna, who was scribe in chaps. 36 ff., had succeeded in supplanting Eliakim, the major domo. I fail to see what right Professor König has to say that, if this sequence of chap. 22 after chap. 36 is adopted, "it can be inferred neither from chaps. 36 ff. nor from 22:15-18 that Shebna actually did force out Eliakim . . . and we drift into the realm of baseless conjecture." If Eliakim is major domo in chaps. 36 ff. and Shebna is major domo in 22:15-18 and 22:15-18 follows chaps. 36 ff., Shebna must have entered into Eliakim's office, and the anger of Isaiah certainly justifies the conjecture that Shebna had supplanted Eliakim. Professor König urges against the proposed sequence (*a*) that my description of the anger of Isaiah is hyperbolic (p. 684). I suppose this objection is intended to weaken the discrepancy between 22:15-18 and chaps. 36 ff., if 22:15-18 is placed before chaps. 36 ff. The reader must be left to judge of my hyperbole at this point. (*b*) Professor König is also confounded at the amount of supposition which my theory of the sequence demands. But Professor König concedes (p. 685) that he must make assumptions also:

The threat against Shebna in 22:15-18 finds a sufficient explanation in the arrogance of Shebna which is indicated by the double "here" (22:16*a*) and *in other mistakes* of Shebna which had merited the appellation "thou shame of thy Lord's house" (vs. 18*b*). If we find the cause for the prophetic condemnation in the *encroachments* of which Shebna had been guilty, we can stand by the text as the trustworthy basis for our judgment. [*Italics mine.*]

But what are these *mistakes* and *encroachments*? Professor König does not tell us. My view allows us to specify them. They were upon Eliakim and what Eliakim stood for. Is this such an addition to the text? Is it not an inevitable deduction from the text? (*c*) Finally Professor König feels the difficulties of the usual view of the sequence. He admits that it requires one assumption, viz., "that the divine threat was actually fulfilled, though perhaps in a modified form." Unfortunately Professor König's article in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* is inaccessible to me, and I

cannot be sure of what he means by a "modified form;" but I imagine he refers to the view which sees in Shebna's position of scribe in Isa., chaps. 36 ff., the beginning of Shebna's degradation, he being at this time deposed from the major domoship; or possibly he holds that this supposed degradation is the *only* fulfilment, the threat in 22:15-18 being remitted, "modified," for some reason or other. In either case Professor König, like those who have preceded him, can find in chaps. 36 ff. a fulfilment *only* of 22:20-23, not of 22:15-18. In other words, chaps. 36 ff. are related to 22:15-18 and 20-23 in two different ways. While chaps. 36 ff. could be explained as following 22:20-23 as usually interpreted, though even this is unnatural, they cannot be explained as following on 22:15-18.

2. But if 22:15-18 are once located after chaps. 36 ff., then there are but two possible interpretations for vss. 20-23. These verses cannot be placed before chaps. 36 ff.; for *ex hypothesi*, Shebna had not as yet supplanted Eliakim. But Isaiah would not be promising Eliakim an office which he was already occupying. Hence, if vss. 15-18 are placed after chaps. 36 ff., vss. 20-23 will also be placed after these chapters. In that event vss. 20-23 must be either a promise to Eliakim of *restitution* to the office formerly occupied by him, as Calvin suggested, or vss. 20-23 is a promise to Eliakim of another office, namely that of the kingship. As there is no hint in vss. 20-23 that Eliakim had ever before occupied the office here promised him, but, on the contrary, since it is clear that he is promised something through which he was to gain a *new* dignity both for himself and for his family, we are shut up to the supposition that he is here promised the kingship. Thus, when vss. 20-23 and 15-18 are studied in the light of chap. 36, the suggestions previously advanced with reference to vss. 19 and 20-23 are abundantly confirmed. Verse 19 is now clearly seen to be a gloss connecting two passages, vss. 15-18 and 20-23, which originally had nothing immediately to do with each other.

Having reviewed all the objections urged by Professor König against my exegesis and criticism of 22:15-25, it remains to consider his critique of the historical inferences which I ventured to draw from this exegesis and criticism.

D. It is at this point that the speculative nature of my conclusions is most apparent, yet I must insist that, while inference never can take the place of documented facts, still on the basis of inference we may construct a helpful working hypothesis.

1. The surest datum from which to start is the position of 22:15-18 after chaps. 36 ff.; i. e., after the campaign of Sennacherib in 701. This sequence implies that the anti-prophetic Shebna succeeded in supplanting

Eliakim sometime after 701. But if 22:15-18 are once placed after 701, we must come down to the accession of Manasseh to find a suitable time in which an anti-prophetic person could push himself into office, for after 701 till the close of Hezekiah's reign the influence of Isaiah was certainly in the ascendant (pp. 637 ff.). At this point I would modify my theory in one particular. The prestige of Isaiah after 701 was not gained by Isaiah through the fulfilment of prophecies of deliverance; for there were probably no such prophecies and no deliverance in 701. Further investigation has convinced me that in 701 Isaiah was a prophet of doom, and that the reforms initiated by the prophetic party after this year were due to the repentance of the court because of Jehovah's visitation upon the kingdom in 701, and the influence of Isaiah was due to the fact that he had foreseen just what the outcome of Hezekiah's revolt against Assyria in 701 was to be. (Cf. my article, "The Invasion of Sennacherib," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October, 1906.) Now, the success of Shebna can be understood perfectly if brought into connection with the antiprophetic reaction at the accession of Manasseh. If, therefore, the critical premise is accepted that 22:15-18 follows chaps. 36 ff., the historical conclusion that 22:15-18, implying a successful encroachment of an antiprophetic character upon one of the highest offices in the land, is to be placed in Manasseh's reign, cannot be deemed improbable.

2. My second datum is the rivalry of Shebna and Eliakim. This is admitted even on the old theory of the meaning of 22:15 ff. But if Shebna is antiprophetic and is opposed by Isaiah, it follows that Eliakim must represent the prophetic party. Again this inference is almost a matter of course.

3. My third datum is that this rivalry was of the intensest nature and must have profoundly affected the national life, as is seen in the fact that the opponents of Eliakim actually succeeded in getting their opinions of Eliakim incorporated into the biblical text. (vss. 24 ff.). But just what form did this rivalry between Shebna and Eliakim take? Was it a struggle simply for the office of major domo?

4. Here we arrive at my fourth datum—the fact that, when vss. 20-23 are taken by themselves, they seem to promise to Eliakim the kingship. From this it was inferred that Eliakim, as the head of the prophetic party, aimed at the overthrow of Manasseh, who was backed by the major domo Shebna, the head of the antiprophetic party.

5. This inference was finally supported by II Kings, 21:16, which was taken to refer to the bloody massacre by which this prophetic revolt was put down. Is there anything in this general construction that is in

and of itself historically improbable? Professor König himself admits (p. 685) the possibility of such a reaction. But he emphatically denies that such a revolution actually did take place in the reign of Manasseh. His objection to my proposed reconstruction of the historical situation is admittedly a serious one. He claims that Eliakim, *son of Hilkiiah*, was not of the Davidic dynasty, but a revolution in Judah to unseat the Davidic dynasty is highly improbable. This I will have to concede. Hence, if my hypothesis is to be maintained, it must be assumed that Eliakim was of the royal family. This is indeed a disadvantage, as there is nothing apart from the interests of the theory directly to justify this assumption. Yet I cannot agree with Professor König that the fact that he is merely called the son of Hilkiiah would exclude his Davidic origin. He was probably not closely connected with the court, and his family was in reduced circumstances, for his enemies were able to heap ridicule upon him (vss. 24 ff.); but, on the other hand, it may well be argued from his occupancy of the office of major domo in the reign of Hezekiah that he was of noble birth.

Whether or not Professor König's arrow has succeeded in piercing at this point between "the joints of the harness" of my argument and inflicting upon it a fatal wound must be left to the candid reader to decide.

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